Meeting of Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission

100. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY :

SHRI MURLI DEORA :

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether a meeting of Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission was held in New Delhi in September, 2003;

(b) if so, the subjects discussed and the decisions arrived at therein;

(c) the number of rivers on which disputes over sharing the water persists;

(d) the number of treaties entered into so far;

(e) the steps taken to resolve the matter in a cordial manner; and

(f) whether it is also a fact that the Bangladesh Government raised the issue of India's proposed project of inter-linking of rivers in the meeting although it was not listed on the agenda?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY): (a) Yes, Sir. The 35th meeting of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission was held at New Delhi on 29th September to 1st October, 2003.

(b) During the meeting, under the Agenda Items the Commission reviewed the progress in implementation of the sharing arrangements under the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh Treaty on Sharing of Ganga/Ganges Waters. While reviewing the progress of works by the Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) on arrangements for sharing waters of Teesta and other six common rivers namely, Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla (Jaldhaka) and Dudhkumar (Torsa), the Commission directed the JCE to finalise the Terms of Reference for the Joint Scientific Study to assess the availability and demand of Teesta waters in each country and draft Interim Agreement for sharing of the Teesta flows by the end of 2003 and expedite the formulation for sharing of water for other six rivers. The Commission discussed the issue relating to unprecedented floods of 2000 in West Bengal of India and Southwest Bangladesh and ways and means to tackle such eventuality in the future and directed the Indo-Bangladesh Task Force on the Icchamati Basin to come up a timely action plan. The cooperation in the flood forecasting and warning

arrangements between the two countries was also discussed and the Commission directed the Experts Committee to hold another meeting. As regards arsenic mitigation and the decision of the Government of India for supplying of the arsenic kits as well as arsenic removal plants including filters to Bangladesh on a complimentary basis, the Bangladesh side assured to send their scientists for pre-inspection of the items. India's proposed Tipaimukh Dam Project on river Barak was also discussed where it was assured by India that if it is ever decided to build and diversion structure on the Barak river, it would be done after due consultations with Bangladesh.

India's proposed River Linking Project and repair to the embankments along the Muhuri river in Tripura also came up for discussion as miscellaneous items.

Regarding the River-Linking Project, the Indian side stated that the proposal was only at a conceptual stage and that there was nothing to discuss on this matter. As regards the repair to the embankments along the Muhuri rivers in Tripura, the Indian side was assured by the Bangladesh side that it would approach the relevant authorities in Bangladesh to obtain an early decision on the matter, preferably by January, 2004.

(c) There is no dispute on any river over sharing of the waters. However, as stated above, discussions are continuing with Bangladesh for finalization of the arrangements of sharing of waters of Teesta and other six common rivers.

(d) One *i.e.* Indo-Bangladesh Treaty on sharing of waters of the Ganga/Ganges at Farakka 1996.

(e) The Permanent Joint River Commission (JRC) has been established between the India and Bangladesh in the Year 1972 and various meetings under the Commission are held in a cordial manner to resolve the matters relating to common rivers.

(f) Yes, Sir. The issue of India's proposed river interlinking project was raised by the Bangladesh side. However, the same was discussed as a miscellaneous item and not as an Agenda item.